

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. Cancelled.

2 (Currently amended). ~~An image forming apparatus according to claim 1~~ An image forming apparatus comprising:

image forming stations arranged along a sheet transport path, each having an image carrier;

a transfer/transport belt for holding and transporting downstream in a sheet transport direction a sheet for an image to be formed thereon by the image forming stations;

transfer electrodes in contact through the transfer/transport belt with the image carriers provided in the image forming stations; and

a voltage applying device for applying a voltage to the transfer electrodes, wherein the voltage applying device, when a transfer process is not performed, applies a non-transfer bias voltage to only the transfer electrode in contact with the image carrier, the non-transfer bias voltage having the same polarity as transfer bias voltage and being lower than a transfer bias voltage,

wherein the voltage applying device applies a higher non-transfer bias voltage to a first transfer electrode positioned upstream with reference to the sheet transport direction than to the other transfer electrodes.

3 (Currently amended). ~~An image forming apparatus according to claim 1~~ An image forming apparatus comprising:

image forming stations arranged along a sheet transport path, each having an

image carrier;

a transfer/transport belt for holding and transporting downstream in a sheet transport direction a sheet for an image to be formed thereon by the image forming stations;

transfer electrodes in contact through the transfer/transport belt with the image carriers provided in the image forming stations; and

a voltage applying device for applying a voltage to the transfer electrodes, wherein the voltage applying device, when a transfer process is not performed, applies a non-transfer bias voltage to only the transfer electrode in contact with the image carrier, the non-transfer bias voltage having the same polarity as transfer bias voltage and being lower than a transfer bias voltage,

wherein the non-transfer bias voltage is increased as an electric potential of the image carriers increases.

4. Canceled.

5 (Currently amended). ~~An image forming apparatus according to claim 1~~ An image forming apparatus comprising:

image forming stations arranged along a sheet transport path, each having an image carrier;

a transfer/transport belt for holding and transporting downstream in a sheet transport direction a sheet for an image to be formed thereon by the image forming stations;

transfer electrodes in contact through the transfer/transport belt with the image carriers provided in the image forming stations; and

a voltage applying device for applying a voltage to the transfer electrodes, wherein the voltage applying device, when a transfer process is not performed, applies a non-transfer bias voltage to only the transfer electrode in contact with the image carrier, the non-

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transfer bias voltage having the same polarity as transfer bias voltage and being lower than a transfer bias voltage,

wherein the voltage applying device applies an increased non-transfer bias voltage to the transfer electrodes as rotational speed of the image carriers increases.